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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the literature of racism. It discusses definitions of racism and prejudice, types of racism, and the existence of racism in society. The paper concludes that the complexities of the existence of racism in society make it difficult to evaluate its presence. Only through closer evaluation and clearer identification can effective ways of reducing racism be found. Contains 25 references. (EH)

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Running Head: RACISM: DEFINITION AND ITS EXISTENCE

Racism: A Literature Review of its Definition and Existence in Work Settings

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Although a high majority of individuals agree that racism is negative, often people are unaware of the multitude of behaviors which can be considered racist. Racism has existed throughout time in many different cultures and geographic regions. Even though legal and political efforts within the United States are attempting to reduce racism, it still is prevalent in our society today. Principally, racism exists today through subtle covert behaviors which are ingrained through the various systems and socialization. Politicians, administrators, educators, and various other professions often naively assume that ethnic diversity alone decreases racism. Unfortunately, various diversity programs have failed at reducing racism or changing racist behavior. Therefore, a further examination of the issue of racism and its existence is imperative, especially for those professionals interacting with diverse populations.

Foremost, it is important to identify how the current professional literature has defined racism. Often words such as stereotypes and prejudice have become equated with racism. Thus, the author will attempt to distinguish these terms. Lippmann (cited in McCauley, Stitt, & Segal, 1980) broadly defined stereotype as "an oversimplified picture of the world, one that satisfies a need to see the world as more understandable and manageable than it really is" (p.195). In general, stereotypes are frequently thought of as "beliefs that are held by members of one group concerning the characteristics of members of another group" (von Hippel, 1994, p. 398). Consequently, stereotypes can consist of either positive or negative cognitions about another group.

Prejudice, on the other hand, is often considered the next detrimental step towards racist behaviors. Several authors have stated that prejudice consists of negative cognitions of the majority group vented toward the minority group based on a stereotype concerning the group (van Dijk, 1993; von Hippel, 1994). Ponterotto (1991) examined several definitions of prejudice and concluded that prejudice is often

> negative in nature and can be individually or group focused. It can be maintained as an internal attitude or belief or expressed overtly; it is based on

> faulty or substantiated data; and further more, it is rooted in an inflexible generalization (p. 216).

Furthermore, Allport (cited in Ponterotto, 1991) developed a five stage model of prejudice going from subtle to a more overt forms of prejudice. The first stage, antiocutin, is characterized by prejudice talk within small groups of one's own race. In the second stage, individuals will withstand minor inconvenience to avoid other races. The third stage, discrimination, is outright exclusion and prejudice. The fourth stage is physical attack, such as interracial aggression in schools and other forums. Lastly, extermination is the most detrimental form of prejudice. Extermination involves the planned destruction of a group, which is supported by the KKK and other white supremacist groups.

Ridley (1995) demonstrates how prejudice itself is not racist, but how it can lead to racist behaviors. Specifically, Ridley state that racism is determined by outcomes. For example, prejudicial motivations can either lead to racist or nonracist outcomes. Ridley (1995) states that whether intentionally or unintentionally, it is the outcome that determines the racist behavior of the individual not the prejudice.

Allport (cited in Katz, 1991) felt that prejudices served important psychological needs, such as augmenting one's ego structure. Therefore, motivations for prejudice may not be exclusively related to race issues, but domination issues. When examining overt racism, biological racism, and subtle racism, Kleinpenning and Hagendorn (1993) found that the symbolic (subtle) racist type was significantly more prejudiced than the overt aversive racist! As a result, issues of prejudice and psychological needs may play a more complex role in the process of racist behaviors than other variables.

Definitions of Racism

Racism is often considered the ultimate violent act a person can commit towards another individual of another race. When the word racism is uttered blood begins to race through the body, opinions are exclaimed, and white individuals often feel unjustly accused. The purpose of

this paper is not to implicate anyone as being racist, but to help professionals be more competent and knowledgeable about this issue.

Various researchers have attempted to define racism, but there are a variety of definitions that currently exist. First, turning to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, racism is defined as "the assumption that psychocultural traits and capacities are determined by biological race and that races differ decisively from one another which is usually coupled with a belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race and its right to domination over others" (cited in Zuckerman, 1990, p.1301). While this definition is useful in demonstrating the dynamics of domination involved in racism, it fails to mention what specific behaviors or actions are considered racist.

Serendipitously, authors have attempted to explore a spectrum of behaviors that encompass racism. Giddens (cited in van Dijk, 1993) states that "racism means falsely attributing inherited characteristics of personality or behavior to individuals of a particular physical appearance. Furthermore, a racist is someone who believes that a biological explanation can be given for characteristics of superiority or inferiority supposedly possessed by people of a given physical stock" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 170). But once again, how is superiority specifically inflicted upon minorities? What qualifies as racist acts? Butts assists the reader by identifying that "racism consists in the predication of decisions, policies, and behavior on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group. Racism can be both overt and covert" (cited in Brantley, 1983, p. 1605).

In addition, Pinderhughes defines how racism can be based on fear and how behaviors are ignited through group interaction.

> Racism, beginning pragmatically in the behavior of group members with fellow group members, inadvertently produces "racism" within the mental functions of each individual as certain exciting, disruptive 'dark,' 'evil,' threatening components are segregated. This internal 'racism' is then externalized and projected into the behavior of each individual (cited in Butts, 1971, p. 68).

Conclusively these authors concur that racism involves subjugating behavior, that is based on attitudes, beliefs, fears, and personality parameters (Cummings & Pallack, 1992; Brantley, 1989). Gradually, the literature hones the specifics of racism and its origins.

Two authors who have made some of the greatest strides defining racism are Alderfer and Ridley. Alderfer (1994) clearly states that the definition of racism is not solid.

> There are a set of interdependent meanings for racism which include: 1) recurrent behavioral patterns with intellectual justifications about why one racial group is superior to another; 2) members of one racial group with more power than another group using that power to demean, subvert, or destroy members of another group; 3) individuals who are viewed as characterologically bigoted people and collective entities that reproduce racist practices regardless of who holds key positions; 4) subtle forms that include racial jokes and unexamined assumptions and heinous actions that involve assaulting and killing people based upon their racial identity; 5) and conscious expression (Alderfer, 1994, p. 217).

Alderfer identifies specifically that racism includes a wide range of behaviors from subtle jokes to murder. In addition, racism can involve individuals or a collective system that unknowingly may encourage the suppression of another group.

As described previously, there are a number of ways racism evolves. Alderfer (1994) has ascertained four ways in which white people cope with race relations that may lead to racist or nonracist behavior. One way individuals may cope with racial tension is to be actively racist; this is coined as characterological racism. The majority of individuals in society do not fall into this category. A second way in which white individuals may adjust to racial tension is by an unwitting participation in an unconscious process that unintentionally has racist ends. For example, being a pacifist in an environment which subtly tends to suppress minority individuals. Thirdly, a few white individuals espouse antiracism from dawn until dusk, yet see whiteness as a privilege. Although they strive for antiracism, they often fail to look at themselves as part of a "racist structure." Lastly, Alderfer (1994) states that white people may cope with racial tension by

slowly learning to accept the overwhelming tones of racism throughout the structure of the eurocentric culture.

Whereas Alderfer (1994) gives more specifics of the manifestations of racism, Ridley (1995) attempts to provide us with the necessary components for racism to exist and how racism is more specifically defined in behavior, rather than by attitudes or beliefs.

Foremost, Ridley (1995) identifies 15 propositions which support more clearly the idenfication of what racism is. These propositions are:

Proposition 1: Racism is reflected in human behavior

Proposition 2: Racism is not racial prejudice

Proposition 3: Although racial prejudice involves unfavorable attitudes and intentions, it does not necessarily translate into racism

Proposition 4: Anyone can be racist, including members of racial minority groups

Proposition 5: The criteria for determining racism lie in the consequences of the behavior not the causes

Proposition 6: A person needs power to behave like a racist

Proposition 7: Failing to combat racism is racism

Proposition 8: Although racism is observable, racist behavior is not always observed

Proposition 9: Racism is learned, the same way any operant behavior is learned

Proposition 10: Because racism is operant behavior it can be changed

Proposition 11: Consciousness raising is an inadequate method of combating racism

Proposition 12: To change racism, begin by identifying specific behaviors as racist

Proposition 13: Racism tends to resist change

Proposition 14: To prevent a relapse into racism, nonracist behaviors and fair practices must be acquired, reinforced and carefully monitored

Proposition 15: Combating racism is the responsibility of everyone (Ridley, 1995, pp 17-25)

Ridley (1995), states that once a comprehension of these propositions is ingested, then the reader can more adequately understand his definition of racism. He defines "racism as any **behavior** or pattern of behavior that tends to **systematically** deny access to opportunities or privileges to members of one racial group while perpetuating access to opportunities and privileges **(preferential treatment)** to members of another racial group" (p. 28).

In addition, there are five essential features of this definition that Ridley (1995) pursues . First, racism can include a **variety of behaviors** including both overt and covert, unintentional and intentional. Next, racism involves **systematic** behavior which requires a larger social system that consistently denies access to opportunities for minorities. Since Ridley proposes that racism does not exist in isolation, an examination of the process of systemic behavior is needed.

> All social systems, including organizations, consist of the patterned activities of a number of individuals. Moreover, these patterned activities are complementary or interdependent with respect to some common output or outcome; they are repeated,

> relatively enduring, and bounded in space and time. If the activity pattern occurs only once or at unpredictable intervals, we could not speak of an organization. The stability or recurrence of activities can be examined in relation to the energetic input into the system (Katz & Kahn, cited in Ridley, 1995, p. 30).

With regards to racism, input could be prejudice attitudes, throughput is the racist action, and output is the negative outcome. These outcomes ultimately lead to **preferential treatment** in which members of the preferred group have an unfair advantage.

Lastly, Ridley (1995) emphasizes that racism involves **nonrandom victimization**. Various research studies have continued to identify how minorities continue to be denied access to power and how a dominating force (e.g. racism) may be creating inequitable outcomes (Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974).

In summary, racism involves social systems, behavior, attitudes, and psychological underpinnings. It is my belief that racism is more evident in the outcome of behaviors as stated by Ridley (1995), rather than the intention itself.

Types of Racism

Within and outside of subtle racism are various forms of racism. Namely, scientific racism, symbolic racism and institutional racism are the most common forms discussed in the current literature. Scientific racism, the act of attempting to identify biologically that the dominant culture possesses superior attributes, continues to exist for both unintentional and intentional reasons. It has existed for years and continues to be portrayed in the media. (Rushton cited in Fairchild, 1991). For example, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) have overtly claimed that current IQ tests are adequate for all races. Thus, if blacks tend to score lower, then there must be some deficit in their biological makeup which results in differential scores. Other researchers participate in scientific racism by focusing their subject pools solely on the dominant culture as to enhance

their own resources and knowledge. As a result, scientific racism itself is complex and far reaching.

The symbolic form of racism, which is unintentional and covert, is the most insidious because people are often unaware of the harmful outcomes that result from their behaviors. Since, "individuals, groups, or institutions that engage in unintentional racism do not wish to do harm, it is difficult to get them to see themselves as engaging in racist behavior. They are more likely to deny their racist behaviors." (Ridley, 1995, p. 38). Therefore, it is imperative that various types of racism are identified and defined. Fortunately, several researchers have not only identified these concepts throughout research, but are also creating scales which measure the presence of more covert forms of racism.

Duckitt (1991) designed a scale which appears to be able to tap into subtle racism with more accuracy than other current overt racism scales. Although this scale was designed for individuals in South Africa, it provides other systems the opportunity for examining and developing their own measures.

Donnerstein and Donnerstein (cited in Katz ,1991) conducted a study which examined aggression against black and white target individuals. The researchers found that if the target was a black individual then direct aggression was reduced, but indirect aggression was increased. However, for white target subjects neither form of aggression was affected by situation variables. Consequently, the researchers identified that although overt aggression might have been reduced, covert aggression still existed, endorsing the theory that covert racism is the more prevalent type of racism today.

Furthermore, Sidanius, Devereux, and Pratto (1992) conducted an extensive study to analyze whether the symbolic racism model (anti-black affect, and traditional American values) or the social dominance model (all systems have castes systems, and there is bound to be a group at the top and a group at the bottom), is the more prevalent reaction to dealing with racial issues. Sidanius, Devereux, and Pratto (1992) used LISREL VI to run structural equation models to determine the plausibility of these models. The results showed that the social dominance model

failed to fit satisfactorily. However, they found that anti-egalitarianism and racial policy attitudes are significantly related to symbolic racism.

Lastly, a more pervasive form of racism is "systemic or institutional racism." Dovidio and Gaertner define institutional racism as "the intentional or unintentional manipulation or toleration of institutional polices (i.e. admissions criteria) that unfairly restrict the opportunities of particular groups of people" (cited in Watts & Carter, 1991, p. 329). More specifically, "those acts or institutional procedures that help create or perpetuate sets of advantages or privileges for the majority group, and exclusions or deprivations for the minority groups" (Rodriguez cited in Watts & Carter,1991, p. 329). If one concurs with Ridley (1995) then institutional racism or systematic racism is the foundation of all racism. The question today is what systems continue to adhere to racist behaviors.

Watt and Carter outline how institutional racism is the structure that leads to personal racism in an inverted triangle figure. They state that personal discrimination is a manifestation of institutional racism exhibited by upper management or other superiors.

Furthermore, Watts and Carter (1991) assessed which institutional polices were viewed as racists by black civil service employees using a racism climate scale, adverse impact scale, and personal discrimination scale. One item overwhelmingly seen as racist was having a larger percentage of blacks in lower level positions than whites. Three policies which were seen as least racist were formal personnel polices such as a civil service entrance exams, and promotion procedures. Overall, 90% of the subjects agreed that there were not enough blacks in powerful positions. Power, mobility, and lack of resources were the most distinguishing aspects individuals felt involved institutional racism.

Other researchers have also suggested that institutional racism can be manifested through social isolation, decreased promotion opportunities for minorities, disaffection, and stress (De La Cancela & Sotomayor, 1993; Baker, 1995). In addition, Baker (1995) determined that the power of the dominant group in professional settings, especially in university settings, can be identified by the forms of address that are used (i.e. Hello, Mr., Mrs., Sally, etc.). While the form of address

used may not specifically determine the existence of racism, it may shed light as to how the "dominant" group attempts to maintain power.

Concurring with Ridley's definition of racism, De La Cancela and Sotomayor (1993) define institutional racism as "organizational processes, behavior, policies, or procedures that produce negative outcomes for people of color while maintaining the status or economic advantages of Caucasians i.e. where administrators maintain dominance over African Americans" (p. 61). Although these various definitions aid systems in identifying racism, many institutions continue to avoid evaluating themselves for fear that they could be subject to litigation. For example, Rappaport (cited in De La Cancela & Sotomayor, 1993) found that clinical psychology programs belittled and oppressed students who explored institutional racism within the department. Unfortunately, even in fields that are frequently considered "bias free," racism continues to exist.

Existence of Racism

The existence of racism in forums such as education, health care, business, and civil service is the subtle, covert, systematic racism that has been presented. While there are a multitude of settings which display racist behaviors and undertones, only a few will be presented to give a broad spectrum of the ways in which subjugation can exist.

First of all, the educational system has frequently been attacked throughout history for segregation and other discriminatory behaviors. Preiswerk (cited in van Dijk, 1993) found that ambiguous concept of race continue to be used in textbooks. Minority cultures are constantly presented as "lagging behind." In addition, "we" (the dominant culture) are portrayed as "flashing a wand" granting minorities groups special privileges. Albeit, some truth exists in the fact that the government provides economic assistance to various cultures in need, but by claiming we give them privileges asserts that "we" are in control of these groups. Even if these textbook authors unintentionally subjugated the minority group, the undertones of superiority of the eurocentric culture are evident. In addition, Millner (cited in van Dijk, 1993) has also identified how minorities are often depicted in negative terms in textbooks, while the white culture is portrayed

as positive or neutral. Fortunately, various organizations such as the Council of Interracial Books for Children are attempting to reduce racism and sexism in textbooks.

Racism also exists in education through various theories which tend to be eurocentric and ill-fitting for a diverse culture. Brown (1991) and Henwood (1994) both discuss how feminist theory, although empowering many women, has neglected the issues of women of color. Brown interviewed several professional women of color and found that they are not desiring apologies, but a change in behavior. The author suggests trying to "see racism through the lenses of failures of mutuality and lack of respect, violations of boundaries, and imbalances of power" (p. 117). Thus, at times racism may not be what we say, but what we don't say. Even though various educational institutions have incorporated "multi-cultural" programs, all disciplines should consider the complexities of the human race.

Although only a few examples of racism in education are presented, many of the readers who are professionals in the educational system may desire a further examination of how racism can exist throughout education. This paper is not intended to examine a single setting exclusively, but to entice an appetite for examining one's self and how racism can exist in your specific work setting. Therefore, the examination of other settings may prove insightful to your own situation.

In the health care system, there are many opportunities for cross-cultural interactions. Ridley (1995) thoroughly examines how therapists counseling minority clients may unintentionally exert power which can impede therapeutic growth. Specifically, Ridley discusses how supervisors at mental health centers assign minority clients to new interns because they claim to be "less experienced" in this area. Furthermore, unknowingly, the therapist may feel that "race" isn't an issue and therefore avoid the issue of race, thus ignoring and denying the client the opportunity to explore such issues. On the other hand, the therapist could be so "anti-racist" and ignore the other psychological issues presented.

Another helping field, elder care, has also been examined for racism by Mercer, Heacock, and Beck (1993). They interviewed 27 nurses aides in 3 nursing homes. Twenty-four of the twenty-seven subjects were black. These aides stated that the black elder residents were treated

differently than white residents (e.g. residents were left in bodily excretes, medicine failed to be given). In addition, the aides observed racism in the nursing home from supervisors, administrators, residents, and families.

Furthermore, psychology disciplines tend to focus studies on group differences further separating, and perhaps creating harmful stereotypes about cultures. As a result, Zuckerman (1991) suggests that a more "important task is to discover the biological and social bases of individual differences in personality and intelligence within populations" as compared with group differences (p. 1301). We, as researchers, have a responsibility to be extra critical of research or theory that can lead to racism because our research often influences public opinion and is often ingested as truth without any critique. Therefore, before the research about groups is generalized to the general media, it must be thoroughly critiqued at conferences and in other professional forums.

Another common area which has often been cited for racism is business (New York Times, May 2, 1993, p. 46; Haney & Huratado, 1994). Businesses are primarily cited for racism through management behavior, promotion procedures, and job selection procedures. For example, Fernandez (cited in van Dijk) found by interviewing white and black managers that upper level white management supported racial stereotypes more often than lower level management. The reason for this difference was not unearthed, but it could be postulated that upper level management subjugated themselves to less contact with culturally different employees, thus maintaining typical stereotypes. Word, Zanna, and Cooper (1974) found similar results in a study comparing white interviewees and black interviewees. They found that black interviewees received lees immediate nonverbal communication from the white interviewers, and 25% less time was spent with black individuals as compared to their white counterparts. Furthermore, the researchers found that white interviewers perceived the black applicants as less adequate.

Finally, a hot topic for the twentieth century has been the existence of overt racism in the police force. From the Rodney King trial to O.J. Simpson, racial debates and tensions have transpired throughout the country. While the majority of police officers would never admit to

being racist, many continue to participate in such behavior. Wilson and Bennet (1994) did a study which asked individuals, who were not police officers, to evaluate a white police officer's attack on a black suspect. Subjects identified racism based on different levels of provocation. Consistently, the subjects reported that racist behavior was found to be more influenced by the attacker than by suspect provocation. As a result, there appears to be an overwhelming majority of individuals in agreement of what defines "overt" racist behavior, but we, as a society, may still be unclear about the complexities of subtle racist behaviors. Consequently, it is imperative that programs and assessments are designed to accurately depict and reduce undue subjugation and dominance.

In conclusion, racism is a complex word and behavior. The society of the United States is infiltrated with various systemic and covert racist behaviors which have yet to be eliminated. Hopefully through a clearer identification of the complexities of its existence, professionals can evaluate and incorporate more effective ways of reducing its permanence.

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